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#### DAKOTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO PARTICIPATE IN BLUE STAR MUSEUMS

On May 24, 2010 the Dakota County Historical Society announced the launch of Blue Star Museums, a partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts. Blue Star Families, and more than 600 museums across America offer FREE admission to all active duty military personnel and their families from Memorial Day through Labor day, 2010. The Blue Star Museums program applies to visits at both the Dakota County Historical Society (Lawshe Memorial Museum, 130 Third Avenue North, South St. Paul, MN 55075, 651-552-7548) and The LeDuc Historic Estate (1629 Vermillion Street, Hastings, MN 55033, 651-437-7055.) Both sites may be viewed on [www.dakotahistory.org](http://www.dakotahistory.org) and families can learn of museum hours and exact locations. The complete list of participating Blue Star Museums is available at [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

Chad Roberts, Executive Director, Dakota County Historical Society says of the program, "We have always recognized veterans and military personnel and provide discounts already. The Blue Star Museums program aligns with the Society's vision for being a community resource so it was an easy choice to participate."

Minnesota has a long history of military service by its citizens. It was the first state to volunteer troops for the Union Army, Governor Stassen left mid-term to serve in WW II as did tens of thousands of others who have served faithfully and well. In Dakota County, at the Lawshe Memorial Museum, there have been and continue to be a series of exhibits, "From the Front," which feature service people in a variety of war and non-war related military engagements. Military people from the Civil War through the War in Iraq have been highlighted. The current exhibit focuses on Dakota County's Home Front, including Victory Gardens, the Minnesota Home Guard during World War I, Civil Defense after World War II, and Cold War Fallout Shelter preparation. At the LeDuc Historic Estate in Hastings, guides explain the significance of the Civil War in the life of the LeDuc family and a Civil War Weekend is being held at the Estate September 11 and 12, 2010. Visitors will learn about events leading up to the war and will be able to witness the life of the Civil War soldier while observing encampments, debates, cooking over an open fire, music, and much more.

The free admission program is available to active duty military and their immediate family members (Military ID holder and five immediate family members,) which includes active duty Reserve and active duty National Guard.

Some special or limited-time museum exhibits may not be included in this free admission program. For questions on particular exhibits or museums, please contact the museum directly.

The National Endowment for the Arts is a public agency dedicated to supporting excellence in the arts - both new and established - bringing the arts to all Americans, and providing leadership in arts education. Established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government, the Arts Endowment is the largest annual national funder of the arts, bringing great art to all 50 states, including rural areas, inner cities, and military bases. For more information, please visit [www.arts.gov](http://www.arts.gov).

This is the latest Arts Endowment program to bring quality arts programs to the military, veterans, and their families. Other NEA programs for the military have included Operation Homecoming: Writing the Wartime Experience, Great American Voices Military Base Tour, and Shakespeare in American Communities Military Base Tour.

Dakota County Historical Society was founded in 1939 for the purpose of collecting, preserving and presenting the history of Dakota County. After years of operating out of South St. Paul's High School and City Hall, a dream was realized and the Society opened the new Lawshe Memorial Museum in South St. Paul in 1978. Since 2005 DCHS has managed the LeDuc Historic Estate, Hastings, which is owned by the City of Hastings. Check [www.dakotahistory.com](http://www.dakotahistory.com) for detailed information.

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